

**Executive Committee for Highway Safety  
Driver Education Working Group  
Meeting Minutes – Mtg. #1  
September 18, 2006**

**Location:**

Chief Engineer's Conference Room, Beryl Rd, 9:30 a.m..

**Committee Members in Attendance:**

Cliff Braam	Katy Jones	Janet Whetstone	Joe Shrader
Chuck Lehning	Phil McGirt	Dale Fox	Stacie Cruz
Jeff Garland			

**Scribe:**

Cliff Braam

**Minutes:**

- The meeting began at 9:30 a.m.

**Task I – Welcome/Introductions**

- Cliff opened the meeting, welcomed and thanked everyone for coming and participating. He provided some background information on why the group was there and highway safety issues in NC.
- Next everyone in the group introduced themselves, where they were from and a bit about their background and area of expertise.

**Task II – Overview Presentation**

- Cliff gave a presentation providing background information on the Executive Committee for Highway Safety (ECHS), the accomplishments of the ECHS to date, the formation of the 14 different Working Groups, and finally the role/charge of the working group and what was expected.

Information on the Executive Committee for Highway Safety can be found at:  
<http://www.ncdot.org/doh/preconstruct/traffic/echs/>

**Task III– Working Group Goals**

- Cliff told the group that from the Executive Committee's perspective, there were several primary objectives/goals of this working group:
  1. Evaluate the existing program
  2. Modify, improve, change the existing program as needed
  3. Ensure that current highway safety issues involving young drivers are being addressed within the curriculum

4. Develop a statewide curriculum

## **Task IV– Open Discussion**

### **Background:**

- 1966 Highway Safety Act – Driver Education made available to all eligible 15 year olds. Three universities where instructors could become certified: ECU, A&T and ASU.
- 1992 – Driver Education taken out of the standard course of study for education. This meant that it now had to be taught outside of the normal school hours. So you can start before 6:00 a.m (not a good idea – students not awake, attentive at this hour) or have them driving after 4:00 (again, not a good idea; driving in rush hour traffic, driving during dark conditions in winter, etc.). This was a political decision.
- The present composition of driver education is 30 hours in the class followed by 6 hours behind the wheel.
- The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and the Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) are the two agencies that can “certify” someone to teach driver education. DPI only accepts certified teachers/instructors (meaning those with a degree in education/ a license in some teaching field) while DMV accepts anyone who has been through an approved training course.
- Currently there are two ways to become eligible to teach driver education:
  1. Be a certified/licensed teacher (meaning you have a teaching degree) and then complete 12 semester hours in driver education courses to add this licensure, or
  2. Complete a 80 hour training course at which point DMV says you are eligible to teach
- At the present time, there are approximately 120,000 students per year that go through driver education, being taught by approximately 2,000 instructors. The ratio of those taught by DPI instructors to those taught by contracted instructors is about 1:1.
- There is no one agency in charge of driver education – this is seen as a problem.
- There is no standard curriculum or text book. While there is a resource guide available, there is no requirement that it has to be utilized. In essence, the possibility exists that the present 2,000 instructors could be teaching 2,000 different things, 2,000 different ways.
- To start a commercial driving school, all that is required is to pay a \$0 fee and have instructors who have completed the 80 DMV course. After these requirements are met, there is no “policing” or monitoring of the commercial programs and no accountability. Quality of the program can be from poor to excellent.
- Each school district choose which route to go: DPI or commercial.

- The integrity of the driver education program is largely determined by who is in charge of it within the county. In some counties, the person in charge of driver education also has many other responsibilities and driver education may not be at the top of their priorities.

### **Initial Suggestion to Improve Driver Education**

One Governing Body – There should be one agency in charge of all driver education activities within the state. The likely agency for this would be DPI. Driver Education should be removed from the DMV. This agency would be responsible for all facets of the program; who can teach, what they teach, oversight of the program, accountability of the program, etc.

There needs to be a statewide, approved curriculum.

There needs to be an approved textbook.

Restrictions on daytime teaching need to be removed (this is an administrative code issue).

Need to get parents more involved as they have the lion's share of responsibility. A driver education instructor has the student in the car for 6 hours; the parent for one year.

Require the parent to come to a one hour presentation to educate them on the importance of their role.

Increase the time behind the wheel from 6 hours to 8 hours.

### **Other Areas for Improvement**

- Increase Level II of the GDL restriction from 6 months to 12 months to keep extra passengers out of the vehicle. As one group member stated, you can take the IQ of the driver and divide it by the number of kids in the car.
- Under the GDL program, there needs to be additional penalties for violations including not wearing safety belts other than just extending the Level II phase for an additional six months.
- Need to enforce existing laws in regards to young people and make them administrative where possible to reduce the burden on the courts. For example; if a young person is caught DWI, immediately take their license administratively.

- The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

**Action Items:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Item</b>
Joe	Post <i>North Carolina Driver Education Resource Guide</i> on ECU web site for download/viewing by group members. Send link out to group members.
Everyone	<p>Make a list (in addition to those items listed in the minutes) of items the group needs to address in order to improve driver education. In an ideal world without limitations, how would the program be designed and operated. This list can be broken out into two categories 1) Driver Education Related and 2) Other Issues for Young Drivers. Comments will be combined and we will use them as the springboard for the next meeting.</p> <p>Please send these to Cliff by November 3, 2006.</p>

NEXT MEETING: TBD